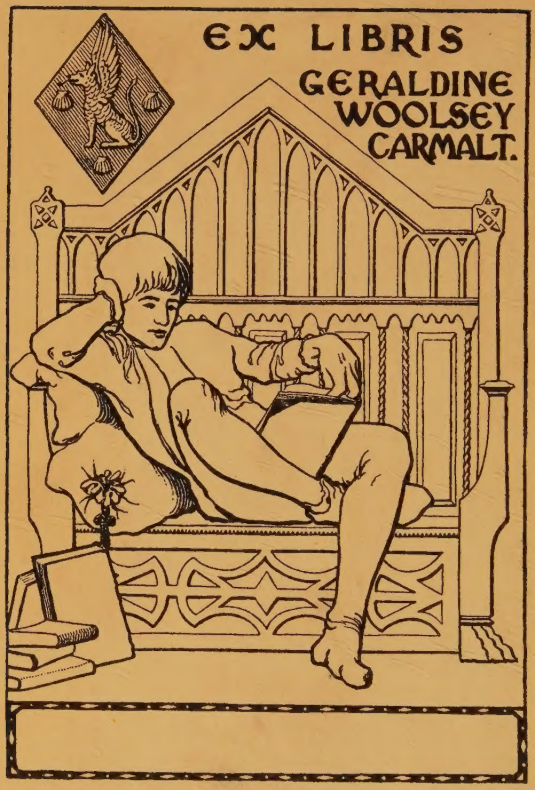
THE NEW MORNING

ALFRED NOYES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THE NEW MORNING

WORKS OF ALFRED NOYES

COLLECTED POEMS—*2 Vols.*
THE LORD OF MISRULE
A BELGIAN CHRISTMAS EVE
THE WINE-PRESS
WALKING SHADOWS—*Prose*
TALES OF THE MERMAID TAVERN
SHERWOOD
THE ENCHANTED ISLAND
AND OTHER POEMS
DRAKE: AN ENGLISH EPIC
POEMS
THE FLOWER OF OLD JAPAN
THE GOLDEN HYNDE
THE NEW MORNING

THE NEW MORNING

POEMS

BY

ALFRED NOYES

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DEDICATION

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TO THE MEMORY OF SIR CECIL SPRING-RICE

I.

STEADFAST as any soldier of the line
He served his England, with the imminent death
Poised at his heart. Nor could the world divine
The constant peril of each burdened breath.

England, and the honour of England, he still served
Walking the strict path, with the old high pride
Of those invincible knights who never swerved
One hair's breadth from the way until they died.

Quietness he loved, and books, and the grave beauty
Of England's Helicon, whose eternal light
Shines like a lantern on that road of duty,
Discerned by few in this chaotic night.

And his own pen, foretelling his release,
Told us that he foreknew "the end was peace."

II.

Soldier of England, he shall live unsleeping
Among his friends, with the old proud flag above;
For even today her honour is in his keeping.
He has joined the hosts that guard her with their love.

They shine like stars, unnumbered happy legions,
In that high realm where all our darkness dies.
He moves, with honour, in those loftier regions,
Above this "world of passion and of lies":

For so he called it, keeping his own pure passion
A silent flame before the true and good;
Not fawning on the throng in this world's fashion
To come and see what all might see who would.

Soldier of England, brave and gentle knight,
The soul of Sidney welcomes you tonight.

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THE NEW MORNING

"THE AVENUE OF THE ALLIES"

THIS is the song of the wind as it came
Tossing the flags of the nations to flame:

I am the breath of God. I am His laughter.
I am His Liberty. That is my name.

So it descended, at night, on the city.
So it went lavishing beauty and pity,
Lighting the lordliest street of the world
With half of the banners that earth has unfurled;
Over the lamps that are brighter than stars.
Laughing aloud on its way to the wars,
Proud as America, sweeping along
Death and destruction like notes in a song,
Leaping to battle as man to his mate,
Joyous as God when he moved to create,—
Never was voice of a nation so glorious,
Glad of its cause and afire with its fate!
Never did eagle on mightier pinion
Tower to the height of a brighter dominion,

Kindling the hope of the prophets to flame,
Calling aloud on the deep as it came,

Cleave me a way for an army with banners.
I am His Liberty. That is my name.

Know you the meaning of all they are doing?
Know you the light that their soul is pursuing?
Know you the might of the world they are making,
This nation of nations whose heart is awaking?
What is this mingling of peoples and races?
Look at the wonder and joy in their faces!
Look how the folds of the union are spreading!
Look, for the nations are come to their wedding.
How shall the folk of our tongue be afraid of it?
England was born of it. England was made of it,
Made of this welding of tribes into one,
This marriage of pilgrims that followed the sun!
Briton and Roman and Saxon were drawn
By winds of this Pentecost, out of the dawn,
Westward, to make her one people of many;
But here is a union more mighty than any.
Know you the soul of this deep exultation?
Know you the word that goes forth to this nation?

"THE AVENUE OF THE ALLIES"

I am the breath of God. I am His Liberty.
Let there be light over all His creation.

Over this Continent, wholly united,
They that were foemen in Europe are plighted.
Here, in a league that our blindness and pride
Doubted and flouted and mocked and denied,
Dawns the Republic, the laughing, gigantic
Europe, united, beyond the Atlantic.
That is America, speaking one tongue,
Acting her epics before they are sung,
Driving her rails from the palms to the snow,
Through States that are greater than Emperors know,
Forty-eight States that are empires in might,
But ruled by the will of one people tonight,
Nerved as one body, with net-works of steel,
Merging their strength in the one Commonweal,
Brooking no poverty, mocking at Mars,
Building their cities to talk with the stars.
Thriving, increasing by myriads again
Till even in numbers old Europe may wane.
How shall a son of the England they fought
Fail to declare the full pride of his thought,

Stand with the scoffers who, year after year,
Bring the Republic their half-hidden sneer?
Now, as in beauty she stands at our side,
Who shall withhold the full gift of his pride?
Not the great England who knows that her son,
Washington, fought her, and Liberty won.
England, whose names like the stars in their station,
Stand at the foot of that world's Declaration,—
Washington, Livingston, Langdon, she claims them,
It is her right to be proud when she names them,
Proud of that voice in the night as it came,
Tossing the flags of the nations to flame:

I am the breath of God. I am His laughter.
I am His Liberty. That is my name.

Flags, in themselves, are but rags that are dyed.
Flags, in that wind, are like nations enskied.
See, how they grapple the night as it rolls
And trample it under like triumphing souls.
Over the city that never knew sleep,
Look at the riotous folds as they leap.

"THE AVENUE OF THE ALLIES"

Thousands of tri-colors, laughing for France,
Ripple and whisper and thunder and dance;
Thousands of flags for Great Britain aflame
Answer their sisters in Liberty's name.
Belgium is burning in pride overhead.
Poland is near, and her sunrise is red.
Under and over, and fluttering between,
Italy burgeons in red, white, and green.
See, how they climb like adventurous flowers,
Over the tops of the terrible towers. . . .
There, in the darkness, the glories are mated.
There, in the darkness, a world is created.
There, in this Pentecost, streaming on high.
There, with a glory of stars in the sky.
There the broad flag of our union and liberty
Rides the proud night-wind and tyrannies die.

ON THE WESTERN FRONT

(1916)

I.

I FOUND a dreadful acre of the dead,
Marked with the only sign on earth that saves.
The wings of death were hurrying overhead,
The loose earth shook on those unquiet graves;

For the deep gun-pits, with quick stabs of flame,
Made their own thunders of the sunlit air;
Yet, as I read the crosses, name by name,
Mort pour la France, it seemed that peace was there;
Sunlight and peace, a peace too deep for thought,
The peace of tides that underlie our strife,
The peace with which the moving heavens are fraught,
The peace that is our everlasting life.

The loose earth shook. The very hills were stirred.
The silence of the dead was all I heard.

II

WE, who lie here, have nothing more to pray.
To all your praises we are deaf and blind.
We may not even know if you betray
Our hope, to make earth better for mankind.

Only our silence, in the night, shall grow
More silent, as the stars grow in the sky;
And, while you deck our graves, you shall not know
How many scornful legions pass you by.

For we have heard you say (when we were living)
That some small dream of good would "cost too much."
But when the foe struck, we have watched you giving,
And seen you move the mountains with one touch.

What can be done, we know. But, have no fear!
If you fail now, we shall not see or hear.

VICTORY

(Written after the British Service at Trinity Church, New York)

I.

BEFORE those golden altar-lights we stood,
Each one of us remembering his own dead.
A more than earthly beauty seemed to brood
On that hushed throng, and bless each bending head.

Beautiful on that gold, the deep-sea blue
Of those young seamen, ranked on either side,
Blent with the khaki, while the silence grew
Deep, as for wings—Oh, deep as England's pride.

Beautiful on that gold, two banners rose—
Two flags that told how Freedom's realm was made,
One fair with stars of hope, and one that shows
The glorious cross of England's long crusade;

Two flags, now joined, till that high will be done
Which sent them forth to make the whole world one.

II.

There were no signs of joy that eyes could see.
  Our hearts were all three thousand miles away.
There were no trumpets blown for victory.
  A million dead were calling us that day.

And eyes grew blind, at times; but grief was deep,
  Deeper than any foes or friends have known;
For Oh, my country's lips are locked to keep
  Her bitterest loss her own, and all her own.

Only the music told what else was dumb,
  The funeral march to which our pulses beat;
For all our dead went by, to a muffled drum.
  We heard the tread of all those phantom feet

Yes. There was victory! Deep in every soul.
We heard them marching to their unseen goal.

III.

There, once again, we saw the Cross go by,
  The Cross that fell with all those glorious towers,
Burnt black in France or mocked on Calvary,
  Till—in one night—the crosses rose like flowers,

Legions of small white crosses, mile on mile,
Pencilled with names that had outfought all pain,
Where every shell-torn acre seems to smile—
Who shall destroy the cross that rose again?

Out of the world's Walpurgis, where hope perished,
Where all the forms of faith in ruin fell,
Where every sign of heaven that earth had cherished
Shrivelled among the lava-floods of hell,

The eternal Cross that conquers might with right
Rose like a star to lead us through the night.

IV.

How shall the world remember? Men forget:
Our dead are all too many even for Fame!
Man's justice kneels to kings, and pays no debt
To those who never courted her acclaim.

Cheat not your heart with promises to pay
For gifts beyond all price so freely given.
Where is the heart so rich that it can say
To those who mourn, "I will restore your heaven"?

But these, with their own hands, laid up their treasure
Where never an emperor can break in and steal,
Treasure for those that loved them past all measure
In those high griefs that earth can never heal,

Proud griefs, that walk on earth, yet gaze above,
Knowing that sorrow is but remembered love.

v.

Love that still holds us with immortal power,
Yet cannot lift us to His realm of light;
Love that still shows us heaven for one brief hour
Only to daunt the heart with that sheer height;

Love that is made of loveliness entire
In form and thought and act; and still must shame us
Because we ever acknowledge and aspire,
And yet let slip the shining hands that claim us.

O, if this Love might cloak with rags His glory,
Laugh, eat and drink, and dwell with suffering men,

Sit with us at our hearth, and hear our story,
This world—we thought—might be transfigured then.

"But Oh," Love answered, with swift human tears,
"All these things have I done, these many years."

VI.

"This day," Love said, "if ye will hear my voice;
I mount and sing with birds in all your skies.
I am the soul that calls you to rejoice.
And every wayside flower is my disguise.

"Look closely. Are the wings too wide for pity?
Look closely. Do these tender hues betray?
How often have I sought my Holy City?
How often have ye turned your hearts away?

"Is there not healing in the beauty I bring you?
Am I not whispering in green leaves and rain,
Singing in all that woods and seas can sing you?
Look, once, on Love, and earth is heaven again.

"O, did your Spring but once a century waken,
The heaven of heavens for this would be forsaken."

VII.

There's but one gift that all our dead desire,
One gift that men can give, and that's a dream,
Unless we, too, can burn with that same fire
Of sacrifice; die to the things that seem;

Die to the little hatreds; die to greed;
Die to the old ignoble selves we knew;
Die to the base contempts of sect and creed,
And rise again, like these, with souls as true.

Nay (since these died before their task was finished)
Attempt new heights, bring even their dreams to birth:—
Build us that better world, Oh, not diminished
By one true splendor that they planned on earth.

And that's not done by sword, or tongue, or pen,
There's but one way. God make us better men.

AMERICAN POEMS 1912-1917

REPUBLIC AND MOTHERLAND

(1912)

(Written after entering New York Harbor at Daybreak)

UP the vast harbor with the morning sun
The ship swept in from sea;
Gigantic towers arose, the night was done,
And—there stood Liberty.

Silent, the great torch lifted in one hand,
The dawn in her proud eyes,
Silent, for all the shouts that vex her land,
Silent, hailing the skies;

Hailing that mightier Kingdom of the Blest
Our seamen sought of old,
The dream that lured the nations through the West,
The city of sunset gold.

Saxon and Norman in one wedded soul
Shook out one flag like fire;
But westward, westward, moved the gleaming goal,
Westward, the vast desire.

Westward and ever westward ran the call,
They followed the pilgrim sun,
Seeking that land which should enfold them all,
And weld all hearts in one.

Here on this mightier continent apart,
Here on these rolling plains,
Swells the first throb of that immortal heart,
The pulse of those huge veins.

Still, at these towers, our Old-World cities jest,
And neither hear nor see
The brood of gods at that gigantic breast,
The conquering race to be.

Chosen from many—for no sluggard soul
Confronts that night of stars—
The trumpets of the last Republic roll
Far off, an end to wars;

An end, an end to that wild blood-red age,
That made and keeps us blind;
A mightier realm shall be her heritage,
The kingdom of mankind.

Chosen from many nations, and made one;
But first, O Mother, from thee,
When, following, following on that Pilgrim sun,
Thy Mayflower crossed the sea.

THE UNION

(*1917*)

YOU that have gathered together the sons of all races,
And welded them into one,
Lifting the torch of your Freedom on hungering faces
That sailed to the setting sun;

You that have made of mankind in your own proud regions
The music of man to be,
How should the old earth sing of you, now, as your legions
Rise to set all men free?

How should the singer that knew the proud vision and loved it,
In the days when not all men knew,
Gaze through his tears, on the light, now the world has approved it;
Or dream, when the dream comes true?

THE UNION

How should he sing when the Spirit of Freedom in thunder
Speaks, and the wine-press is red;
And the sea-winds are loud with the chains that are broken asunder
And nations that rise from the dead?

Flag of the sky, proud flag of that wide communion,
Too mighty for thought to scan;
Flag of the many in one, and that last world-union
That kingdom of God in man;

Ours was a dream, in the night, of that last federation,
But yours is the glory unfurled—
The marshalled nations and stars that shall make one nation
One singing star of the world.

GHOSTS OF THE NEW WORLD

"There are no ghosts in America."

THERE are no ghosts, you say,
To haunt her blaze of light;
No shadows in her day,
No phantoms in her night.
Columbus' tattered sail
Has passed beyond our hail.

What? On that magic coast,
Where Raleigh fought with fate,
Or where that Devon ghost
Unbarred the Golden Gate,
No dark, strange, ear-rinɔed men
Beat in from sea again?

No ghosts in Salem town
With silver buckled shoon?
No lovely witch to drown
Or burn beneath the moon?
Not even a whiff of tea,
On Boston's glimmering quay.

O, ghostly Spanish walls,
  Where brown Franciscans glide,
Is there no voice that calls
  Across the Great Divide,
To pilgrims on their way
Along the Santa Fe?

Then let your Pullman cars
  Go roaring to the West,
Till, watched by lonelier stars,
  The cactus lifts its crest.
There, on that painted plain,
One ghost will rise again.

Majestic and forlorn,
  Wreck of a dying race,
The Red Man, half in scorn,
  Shall raise his haughty face,
Inscrutable as the sky,
To watch our ghosts go by.

What? Is earth dreaming still?
  Shall not the night disgorge
The ghosts of Bunker Hill
  The ghosts of Valley Forge,

Or, England's mightiest son,
The ghost of Washington?

No ghosts where Lincoln fell?
  No ghosts for seeing eyes?
I know an old cracked bell
  Shall make ten million rise
When one immortal ghost
Calls to the slumbering host.

THE OLD MEETING HOUSE

(New Jersey, 1918)

ITS quiet graves were made for peace till Gabriel
blows his horn.
Those wise old elms could hear no cry
Of all that distant agony—
Only the red-winged blackbird, and the rustle of
thick ripe corn.

The blue jay, perched upon that bronze, with
bright unweeting eyes,
Could never read the names that signed
The noblest charter of mankind;
But all of them were names we knew beneath our
English skies.

And on the low gray headstones, with their
crumbling weather-stains,
—Though cardinal birds, like drops of blood,
Flickered across the haunted wood,—
The names you'd see were names that woke like
flowers in English lanes.

John Applegate was fast asleep; and Temperance
Olden, too.
And David Worth had quite forgot
If Hannah's lips were red or not;
And Prudence veiled her eyes at last, as Prudence
ought to do.

And when, across that patch of heaven, that small
blue leaf-edged space
At times, a droning airplane went,
No flicker of astonishment
Could lift the heavy eyelids on one gossip's up-
turned face.

For William Speakman could not tell—so thick
the grasses grow—
If that strange humming in the sky
Meant that the Judgment Day were nigh,
Or if 'twas but the summer bees that blundered to
and fro.

And then, across the breathless wood, a Bell
began to sound,
The only Bell that wakes the dead,
And Stockton Signer raised his head,
And called to all the deacons in the ancient burial-
ground.

THE OLD MEETING HOUSE

"The Bell, the Bell is ringing! Give me back my
rusty sword.
Though I thought the wars were done,
Though I thought our peace was won,
Yet I signed the Declaration, and the dead must
keep their word.

"There's only one great ghost I know could make
that 'larum ring.
It's the captain that we knew
In the ancient buff and blue,
It's our Englishman, George Washington, who
fought the German king!"

So the sunset saw them mustering beneath their
brooding boughs,
Ancient shadows of our sires,
Kindling with the ancient fires,
While the old cracked Bell to southward shook the
ancient meeting house.

PRINCETON

(*1917*)

The first four lines of this poem were written for inscription on the first joint memorial to the American and British soldiers who fell in the Revolutionary War. This memorial was recently dedicated at Princeton.

I.

HERE Freedom stood, by slaughtered friend and foe,
And ere the wrath paled or that sunset died,
Looked through the ages: then, with eyes aglow,
Laid them, to wait that future, side by side.

II.

Now lamp-lit gardens in the blue dusk shine
Through dog-wood red and white,
And round the gray quadrangles, line by line,
The windows fill with light,
Where Princeton calls to Magdalen, tower to tower,
Twin lanthorns of the law,
And those cream-white magnolia boughs embower
The halls of old Nassau.

III.

The dark bronze tigers crouch on either side
  Where red-coats used to pass,
And round the bird-loved house where Mercer
    died
  And violets dusk the grass,
By Stony Brook that ran so red of old,
  But sings of friendship now,
To feed the old enemy's harvest fifty-fold
  The green earth takes the plough.

IV.

Through this May night if one great ghost should
    stray
  With deep remembering eyes,
Where that old meadow of battle smiles away
  Its blood-stained memories,
If Washington should walk, where friend and foe
  Sleep and forget the past,
Be sure his unquenched heart would leap to
    know
  Their hosts are joined at last.

v.

Be sure he walks, in shadowy buff and blue,
Where those dim lilacs wave,
He bends his head to bless, as dreams come true,
The promise of that grave,
Then with a vaster hope than thought can scan,
Touching his ancient sword,
Prays for that mightier realm of God in man,
"Hasten Thy Kingdom, Lord.

vi.

"Land of new hope, land of the singing stars,
Type of the world to be,
The vision of a world set free from wars
Takes life, takes form, from thee,
Where all the jarring nations of this earth,
Beneath the all-blessing sun,
Bring the new music of mankind to birth,
And make the whole world one."

VII.

And those old comrades rise around him there,
Old foemen, side by side,
With eyes like stars upon the brave night-air,
And young as when they died,
To hear your bells, O beautiful Princeton towers,
Ring for the world's release.
They see you, piercing like gray swords through flowers,
And smile from hearts at peace.

BEETHOVEN IN CENTRAL PARK

(After a glimpse of a certain monument in New York, during the Victory Celebration)

THE thousand-windowed towers were all a-
light.
Throngs of all nations filled that glittering
way;
And, rich with dreams of the approaching day,
Flags of all nations trampled down the night.
No clouds, at sunset, die in airs as bright.
No clouds, at dawn, awake in winds as gay;
For Freedom rose in that august array,
Crowned with the stars and weaponed for the
right.

Then, in a place of whispering leaves and gloom,
I saw, too dark, too dumb for bronze or stone,
One tragic head that bowed against the sky;
O, in a hush too deep for any tomb
I saw Beethoven, dreadfully alone
With his own grief, and his own majesty.

SONGS OF THE TRAWLERS AND SEA POEMS

THE PEOPLE'S FLEET

OUT of her darkened fishing-ports they go,
A fleet of little ships, whose every name—
Daffodil, *Sea-lark*, *Rose* and *Surf* and *Snow*,
Burns in this blackness like an altar-flame;

Out of her past they sail, three thousand strong,
The people's fleet that never knew its worth,
And every name is a broken phrase of song
To some remembered loveliness on earth.

There's *Barbara Cowie*, *Comely Bank* and *May*,
Christened, at home, in worlds of dawn and dew:
There's *Ruth* and *Kindly Light* and *Robin Gray*
With *Mizpah*. (May that simple prayer come true!)

Out of old England's inmost heart they sail,
A fleet of memories that can never fail.

KILMENY

DARK, dark lay the drifters against the red West,
As they shot their long meshes of steel overside;
And the oily green waters were rocking to rest
When Kilmeny went out, at the turn of the tide;
And nobody knew where that lassie would roam,
For the magic that called her was tapping unseen.
It was well-nigh a week ere Kilmeny came home,
And nobody knew where Kilmeny had been.

She'd a gun at her bow that was Newcastle's best,
And a gun at her stern that was fresh from the Clyde,
And a secret her skipper had never confessed,
Not even at dawn, to his newly-wed bride;
And a wireless that whispered above, like a gnome,
The laughter of London, the boasts of Berlin. . . .
O, it may have been mermaids that lured her from home;
But nobody knew where Kilmeny had been.

KILMENY

It was dark when Kilmeny came home from her quest
With her bridge dabbled red where her skipper had died;
But she moved like a bride with a rose at her breast,
And *Well done Kilmeny!* the Admiral cried.

Now, at sixty-four fathom a conger may come
And nose at the bones of a drowned submarine;
But—late in the evening Kilmeny came home,
And nobody knew where Kilmeny had been.

There's a wandering shadow that stares at the foam,
Though they sing all the night to old England, their queen.
Late, late in the evening, Kilmeny came home;
And nobody knew where Kilmeny had been.

CAP'N STORM-ALONG

THEY are buffeting out in the bitter grey weather,
Blow the man down, bullies, blow the man down!
Sea-lark singing to *Golden Feather*,
And burly blue waters all swelling aroun'.
There's *Thunderstone* butting ahead as they wallow,
With death in the mesh of their deep-sea trawl;
There's *Night-Hawk* swooping by wild *Sea-swallow;*
And old Cap'n Storm-along leading 'em all.

Bashing the seas to a welter of white,
Look at the fleet that he leads to the fight.
O, they're dancing like witches to open the ball;
And old Cap'n Storm-along's lord of 'em all.

Now, where have you seen such a bully old sailor?
His eyes are as blue as the scarf at his throat;
And he rolls on the bridge of his broad-beamed whaler,
In yellow sou'wester and oil-skin coat.

CAP'N STORM-ALONG

In trawler and drifter, in dinghy and dory,
Wherever he signals, they leap to his call;
They batter the seas to a lather of glory,
With old Cap'n Storm-along leading 'em all.

You'll find he's from Devon, the sailor I mean,
Look at his whaler now, shipping it green.
O, Fritz and his "U" boat must crab it and crawl
When old Cap'n Storm-along sails to the ball.

Ay, there is the skipper that knows how to scare 'em.
Blow the man down, bullies, blow the man down!
Look at the sea-wives he keeps in his harem,
Wicked young merry-maids, buxom and brown:
There's *Rosalind*, the sea-witch, and *Gipsy* so lissom,
All dancing like ducks in the teeth of the squall,
With a bright eye for Huns, and a Hotchkiss to kiss 'em;
For old Cap'n Storm-along's lord of 'em all.

Look at him, battering darkness to light!
Look at the fleet that he leads to the fight!
O, hearts that are mighty, in ships that are small,
Your old Cap'n Storm-along's lord of us all.

THE BIG BLACK TRAWLER

THE very best ship that ever I knew
—Ah-way O, to me O—
Was a big black trawler with a deep-sea crew—
Sing, my bullies, let the bullgine run.

There was one old devil with a broken nose
—Ah-way O, to me O—
He was four score years, as I suppose—
But, sing, my bullies, let the bullgine run.

We was wrecked last March, in a Polar storm
—Ah-way O, to me O—
And we asked the old cripple if his feet was warm—
Sing, my bullies, let the bullgine run.

And the old, old devil (he was ninety at the most)
—Ah-way O, to me O—
Roars, "Ay, warm as a lickle piece of toast"—
So sing, my bullies, let the bullgine run.

"For I soaked my sea-boots and my dungarees
—Ah-way O, to me O—
In the good salt water that the Lord don't freeze"—
Oh, sing, my bullies, let the bullgine run.

NAMESAKES

BUT where's the brown drifter that went out alone?
—Roll and go, and fare you well—
Was her name *Peggy Nutten?* That name is my own.
Fare you well, my sailor.
They sang in the dark, "Let her go! Let her go!"
And she sailed to the West, where the broad waters flow;
And the others come back, but . . . the bitter winds blow.
Ah, fare you well, my sailor.

The women, at evening, they wave and they cheer.
—Roll and go, and fare you well—
They're waiting to welcome their lads at the pier.
Fare you well, my sailor.
They're all coming home in the twilight below;
But there's one little boat . . . Let her go! Let her go!
She carried my heart, and a heart for the foe.
Ah, fare you well, my sailor.

NAMESAKES

The *Nell* and the *Maggie*, the *Ruth* and the *Joan*,
—Roll and go, and fare you well—
They come to their namesakes, and leave me alone.
Fare you well, my sailor.
And names are kep' dark, for the spies mustn't know;
But they'll look in my face, an' I think it will show;
Peggy Nutten's my name. Let her go! let her go!
Ah, fare you well, my sailor.

WIRELESS

NOW to those who search the deep,
Gleam of Hope and *Kindly Light*,
Once, before you turn to sleep,
Breathe a message through the night.
Never doubt that they'll receive it.
Send it, once, and you'll believe it.

Wrecks that burn against the stars,
Decks where death is wallowing green,
Snare the breath among their spars,
Hear the flickering threads between,
Quick, through all the storms that blind them,
Quick with words that rush to find them.

Think you these aërial wires
Whisper more than spirits may?
Think you that our strong desires
Touch no distance when we pray?
Think you that no wings are flying
'Twixt the living and the dying?

WIRELESS

Inland, here, upon your knees,
  You shall breathe from urgent lips,
Round the ships that guard your seas,
  Fleet on fleet of angel ships;
Yea, the guarded may so bless them
That no terrors can distress them.

You shall guide the darkling prow,
  Kneeling thus—and far inland—
You shall touch the storm-beat brow
  Gently as a spirit-hand.
Even a blindfold prayer may speed them,
And a little child may lead them.

FISHERS OF MEN

LONG, long ago He said,
He who could wake the dead,
And walk upon the sea—
"*Come, follow Me.*

"Leave your brown nets and bring
Only your hearts to sing,
Only your souls to pray,
Rise, come away.

"Shake out your spirit-sails,
And brave those wilder gales,
And I will make you then
Fishers of men."

Was this, then, what He meant?
Was this His high intent,
After two thousand years
Of blood and tears?

God help us, if we fight
For right, and not for might.
God help us if we seek
To shield the weak.

Then, though His heaven be far
From this blind welter of war,
He'll bless us, on the sea
From Calvary.

AN OPEN BOAT

O WHAT is that whimpering there in the darkness?

"Let him lie in my arms. He is breathing, I know.
Look. I'll wrap all my hair round his neck."—
"The sea's rising,
The boat must be lightened. He's dead. He must go."

See—quick—by that flash, where the bitter foam tosses,
The cloud of white faces, in the black open boat,
And the wild pleading woman that clasps her dead lover
And wraps her loose hair round his breast and his throat.

"Come, lady, he's dead." *"No, I feel his heart beating.*
He's living, I know. But he's numbed with the cold.

See, I'm wrapping my hair all around him to warm him"——

—"No. We can't keep the dead, dear. Come, loosen your hold.

"Come. Loosen your fingers."—"O God, let me keep him!"

O, hide it, black night! Let the winds have their way!

For there are no voices or ghosts from that darkness,

To fret the bare seas at the breaking of day.

PEACE IN A PALACE

"YOU were weeping in the night," said the Emperor,
"Weeping in your sleep, I am told."
"It was nothing but a dream," said the Empress;
But her face grew gray and old.
"You thought you saw our German God defeated?"
"Oh, no!" she said. "I saw no lightnings fall.
I dreamed of a whirlpool of green water,
Where something had gone down. That was all.

"*All but the whimper of the sea gulls flying,*
Endlessly round and round,
Waiting for the faces, the faces from the darkness,
The dreadful rising faces of the drowned.

"It was nothing but a dream," said the Empress.
"I thought I was walking on the sea;
And the foam rushed up in a wild smother,
And a crowd of little faces looked at me.

They were drowning! They were drowning," said the Empress,
"And they stretched their feeble arms to the sky;
But the worst was—they mistook me for their mother,
And cried as my children used to cry.

"Nothing but a whimper of the sea-gulls flying,
Endlessly round and round,
With the cruel yellow beaks that were waiting for the faces,
The little floating faces of the drowned."

"It was nothing but a dream," said the Emperor,
"So why should you weep, dear, eh?"—
"Oh, I saw the red letters on a life belt
That the green sea washed my way!"—
"What were they?" said the Emperor. "What were they?"—
"Some of them were hidden," said the Empress,
"But I plainly saw the L and the U!"
"In God's name, stop!" said the Emperor.
"You told me that it was not true!

"Told me that you dreamed of the sea gulls flying,
Endlessly round and round,
Waiting for the faces, and the eyes in the faces,
The eyes of the children that we drowned.

"Kiss me and forget it," said the Emperor,
"Dry your tears on the tassel of my sword.
I am going to offer peace to my people,
And abdicate, perhaps, as overlord.
I shall now take up My Cross as Count of Prussia—
Which is not a heavy burden, you'll agree.
Why, before the twenty million dead are rotten
There'll be yachting days again for you and me.
Cheer up!
It would mean a rope for anyone but Me."

"Oh, take care!" said the Empress. "They are flying,
Endlessly round and round.
They have finished with the faces, the dreadful little faces,
The little eyeless faces of the drowned."

THE VINDICTIVE

HOW should we praise those lads of the old *Vindictive*
Who looked Death straight in the eyes,
Till his gaze fell,
In those red gates of hell?

England, in her proud history, proudly enrolls them,
And the deep night in her remembering skies
With purer glory
Shall blazon their grim story.

There were no throngs to applaud that hushed adventure.
They were one to a thousand on that fierce emprise.
The shores they sought
Were armoured, past all thought.

O, they knew fear, be assured, as the brave must know it,

With youth and its happiness bidding their last
good-byes;
Till thoughts, more dear
Than life, cast out all fear.

For if, as we think, they remembered the
brown-roofed homesteads,
And the scent of the hawthorn hedges when day-
light dies,
Old happy places,
Young eyes and fading faces;

One dream was dearer that night than the best of
their boyhood,
One hope more radiant than any their hearts
could prize.
The touch of your hand,
The light of your face, England!

So, age to age shall tell how they sailed through
the darkness
Where, under those high, austere, implacable
stars,
Not one in ten
Might look for a dawn again.

They saw the ferry-boats, *Iris* and *Daffodil*, creeping
Darkly as clouds to the shimmering mine-strewn bars,
Flash into light!
Then thunder reddened the night.

The wild white swords of the search-lights blinded and stabbed them,
The sharp black shadows fought in fantastic wars.
Black waves leapt whitening,
Red decks were washed with lightning.

But, under the twelve-inch guns of the black land-batteries
The hacked bright hulk, in a glory of crackling spars,
Moved to her goal
Like an immortal soul;

That, while the raw rent flesh in a furnace is tortured,
Reigns by a law no agony ever can shake,
And shines in power
Above all shocks of the hour.

O, there, while the decks ran blood, and the star-shells lightened
The old broken ship that the enemy never could break,
Swept through the fire
And grappled her heart's desire.

There, on a wreck that blazed with the soul of England,
The lads that died in the dark for England's sake
Knew, as they died,
Nelson was at their side;

Nelson, and all the ghostly fleets of his island,
Fighting beside them there, and the soul of Drake!—
Dreams, as we knew,
Till these lads made them true.

How should we praise you, lads of the old Vindictive,
Who looked death straight in the eyes,
Till his gaze fell
In those red gates of hell?

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

THE CHIMNEY-SWEEPS OF CHELTENHAM

WHEN hawthorn buds are creaming white,
And the red foolscap all stuck with may,
Then lasses walk with eyes alight,
And it's chimney-sweepers' dancing day.

For the chimney-sweeps of Cheltenham town,
Sooty of face as a swallow of wing,
Come whistling, singing, dancing down
With white teeth flashing as they sing.

And Jack-in-the green, by a clown in blue,
Walks like a two-legged bush of may,
With the little wee lads that wriggled up the flue
Ere Cheltenham town cried "dancing day."

For brooms were short and the chimneys tall,
And the gipsies caught 'em these black-birds cheap,
So Cheltenham bought them, spry and small,
And shoved them up in the dark to sweep.

For Cheltenham town was cruel of old,
  But she has been gathering garlands gay,
And the little wee lads are in green and gold,
  For it's chimney-sweepers' dancing day.

And red as a rose, and blue as the sky,
  With teeth as white as their faces are black,
The master-sweeps go dancing by,
  With a gridiron painted on every back.

But when they are ranged in the market-place,
  The clown's wife comes with an iron spoon,
And cozens a penny for her sweet face
  To keep their golden throats in tune.

Then, hushing the riot of that mad throng,
  And sweet as the voice of a long-dead May,
A wandering pedlar lifts 'em a song,
  Of chimney-sweepers' dancing day;

And the sooty faces, they try to recall. . . .
  As they gather around in their spell-struck rings. . . .
But nobody knows that singer at all
  Or the curious old-time air he sings:—

THE CHIMNEY-SWEEPS

Why are you dancing, O chimney-sweeps of Cheltenham,
And where did you win you these may-coats so fine;
For some are red as roses, and some are gold as daffodils,
But who, ah, who remembers, now, a little lad of mine?

Lady, we are dancing, as we danced in old England
When the may was more than may, very long ago:
As for our may-coats, it was your white hands, lady,
Filled our sooty hearts and minds with blossom, white as snow.

It was a beautiful face we saw, wandering through Cheltenham.
It was a beautiful song we heard, very far away,
Weeping for a little lad stolen by the gipsies,
Broke our hearts and filled 'em with the glory of the may.

THE CHIMNEY-SWEEPS

Many a little lad had we, chirruping in the chimney-tops,
Twirling out a sooty broom, a blot against the blue.
Ah, but when we called to him, and when he saw and ran to her,
All our winter ended, and our world was made anew.

Then she gave us may-coats of gold and green and crimson,
Then, with a long garland, she led our hearts away,
Whispering, "Remember, though the boughs forget the hawthorn,
Yet shall I return to you, that was your lady May."—

But why are you dancing now, O chimney-sweeps of Cheltenham,
And why are you singing of a May that is fled?—
O, there's music to be born, though we pluck the old fiddle-strings,
And a world's May awaking where the fields lay dead.

And we dance, dance, dreaming of a lady most
beautiful
That shall walk the green valleys of this dark
earth one day,
And call to us gently, "O chimney-sweeps of
Cheltenham,
I am looking for my children. Awake, and
come away."

TO A SUCCESSFUL MAN

(What the Ghosts Said)

AND after all the labour and the pains,
After the heaping up of gold on gold,
After success that locked your feet in chains,
And left you with a heart so tired and old,

Strange—is it not?—to find your chief desire
Is what you might have had for nothing then—
The face of love beside a cottage fire
And friendly laughter with your fellow-men?

You were so rich when fools esteemed you poor.
You ruled a field that kings could never buy;
The glory of the sea was at your door;
And all those quiet stars were in your sky.

The nook of ferns below the breathless wood
Where one poor book could unlock Paradise . . .
What will you give us now for that lost good?
Better forget. You cannot pay the price.

TO A SUCCESSFUL MAN

You left them for the fame in which you trust.
But youth, and hope—did you forsake them,
too?
Courage! When dust at length returns to dust,
In your last dreams they may come back to you.

THE OLD GENTLEMAN WITH THE AMBER SNUFF-BOX

THE old gentleman, tapping his amber snuff-box
(A heart-shaped snuff-box with a golden clasp)
Stared at the dying fire. "I'd like them all
To understand, when I am gone," he muttered.
"But how to do it delicately! I can't
Apologize. I'll hint at it . . . in verse;
And, to be sure that Rosalind reads it through,
I'll make it an appendix to my will!"
—Still cynical, you see. He couldn't help it.
He had seen much, felt much. He snapped the snuff-box,
Shook his white periwig, trimmed a long quill pen,
And then began to write, most carefully,
These couplets, in the old heroic style:—

O, had I known in boyhood, only known
The few sad truths that time has made my own,
I had not lost the best that youth can give,
Nay, life itself, in learning how to live.

This laboring heart would not be tired so soon,
This jaded blood would jog to a livelier tune:
And some few friends, could I begin again,
Should know more happiness, and much less pain.
I should not wound in ignorance, nor turn
In foolish pride from those for whom I yearn.
I should have kept nigh half the friends I've lost,
And held for dearest those I wronged the most.

Yet, when I see more cunning men evade
With colder tact, the blunders that I made;
Sometimes I wonder if the better part
Is not still mine, who lacked their subtle art.
For I have conned my book in harsher schools,
And learned from struggling what they worked by rules;
Learned—with some pain—more quickly to forgive
My fellow-blunderers, while they learn to live;
Learned—with some tears—to keep a steadfast mind,
And think more kindly of my own poor kind.

He read the verses through, shaking his wig.
"Perhaps . . . perhaps"—he whispered to himself,
"I'd better leave it to the will of God.
They might upset my own. I do not think
They'd understand. Jocelyn might, perhaps;
And Dick, if only they were left alone.
But Rosalind never; nor that nephew of mine,
The witty politician. No. No. No.
They'd say my mind was wandering, I'm afraid."
So, with a frozen face, reluctantly,
He tossed his verses into the dying fire,
And watched the sparks fly upward.
There, at dawn,
They found him, cold and stiff, by the cold hearth,
His amber snuff-box in his ivory hand.
"You see," they said, "he never needed friends.
He had that curious antique frozen way.
He had no heart—only an amber snuff-box.
He died quite happily, taking a pinch of snuff."

His nephew, that engaging politician,
Inherited the snuff-box, and remarked
His epitaph should be "Snuffed Out." The clubs
Laughed, and the statesman's reputation grew.

WHAT GRANDFATHER SAID

(An epistle from a narrow-minded old gentleman to a young artist of superior intellect and intense realism.)

YOUR thoughts are for the poor and weak?
Ah, no, the picturesque's your passion!
Your tongue is always in your cheek
At poverty that's not in fashion.

You like a ploughman's rugged face,
Or painted eyes in Piccadilly;
But bowler hats are commonplace,
And thread-bare tradesmen simply silly.

The clerk that sings "God save the King,"
And still believes his Tory paper,—
You hate the anæmic fool? I thought
You loved the weak! Was that all vapour?

Ah, when you sneer, dear democrat,
At such a shiny-trousered Tory
Because he doffs his poor old hat
To what he thinks his country's glory,

WHAT GRANDFATHER SAID

To you it's just a coloured rag.
  You hate the "patriots" that bawl so.
Well, my Ulysses, there's a flag
  That lifts men in Republics also.

No doubt his thoughts are cruder far;
  And, where those linen folds are shaking,
Perhaps he sees a kind of star
  Because his eyes are tired and aching.

Banal enough! Banal as truth!
  But I'm not thinking of his banners.
I'm thinking of his pinched white youth
  And your disgusting "new art" manners.

His meek submission stirs your hate?
  Better, my lad, if you're so fervent,
Turn your cold steel against the State
  Instead of sneering at the servant.

He does his job. He draws his pay.
  You sneer, and dine with those that pay him;
And then you write a snobbish play
  For democrats, in which you play him.

Ah, yes, you like simplicity
  That sucks its cheeks to make the dimple.
But this domestic bourgeoisie
  You hate,—because it's all too simple.

You hate the hearth, the wife, the child,
  You hate the heavens that bend above them.
Your simple folk must all run wild
  Like jungle-beasts before you love them.

You own a house in Cheyne Walk,
  (You say it costs three thousand fully)
Where subtle snobs can talk and talk
  And play the intellectual bully.

Yes. I say "snobs." Are names alone
  Free from all change? Your word "Victorian"
Could bite and sting in ninety one
  But now—it's deader than the saurian.

You think I live in yesterday,
  Because I think your way the wrong one;
But I have hewed and ploughed my way,
  And—unlike yours—it's been a long one.

WHAT GRANDFATHER SAID

I let Victoria toll her bell,
  And went with Strindberg for a ride, sir.
I've fought through your own day as well,
  And come out on the other side, sir,—

The further side, the morning side,
  I read free verse (the Psalms) on Sunday.
But I've decided (you'll decide)
  That there is room for song on Monday.

I've seen the new snob on his way,
  The intellectual snob I mean, sir,
The artist snob, in book and play,
  Kicking his mother round the scene, sir.

I've heard the Tories talk like fools;
  And the rich fool that apes the Tory.
I've seen the shopmen break your rules
  And die like Christ, in Christ's own glory.

But, as for you, that liberal sneer
  Reminds me of the poor old Kaiser.
He was a "socialist," my dear.
  Well, I'm your grandson. You'll grow wiser.

MEMORIES OF THE PACIFIC COAST

I KNOW a land, I, too,
Where warm keen incense on the sea-wind blows,
And all the winter long the skies are blue,
And the brown deserts blossom with the rose.

Deserts of all delight,
Cactus and palm and earth of thirsty gold,
Dark purple blooms round eaves of sun-washed white,
And that Hesperian fruit men sought of old.

O, to be wandering there,
Under the palm-trees, on that sunset shore,
Where the waves break in song, and the bright air
Is crystal clean; and peace is ours, once more.

There Beauty dwells,
Beauty, re-born in whiteness from the foam;
And Youth returns with all its magic spells,
And the heart finds its long-forgotten home,—

Home—home! Where is that land?
For, when I dream it found, the old hungering cry
Aches in the soul, drives me from all I planned,
And sets my sail to seek another sky.

NIPPON

LAST night, I dreamed of Nippon . . .
I saw a cloud of white
Drifting before the sunset
On seas of opal light.

Beyond the wide Pacific
I saw its mounded snow
Miraculously changing
In that deep evening glow,

To rosy rifts and hillocks,
To orchards that I knew,
To snows of peach and cherry,
And feathers of bamboo.

I saw, on twisted bridges,
In blue and crimson gleams,
The lanterns of the fishers,
Along the brook of dreams.

NIPPON

I saw the wreaths of incense
  Like little ghosts arise,
From temples under Fuji,
  From Fuji to the skies.

I saw that fairy mountain. . . .
  I watched it form and fade.
No doubt the gods were singing,
  When Nippon isle was made.

THE HUMMING BIRDS

GREEN wing and ruby throat,
What shining spell, what exquisite sorcery,
Lured you to float
And fight with bees round this one flowering tree?

Petulant imps of light,
What whisper or gleam or elfin-wild perfumes
Thrilled through the night
And drew you to this hive of rosy bloom?

One tree, and one alone,
Of all that load this magic air with spice,
Claims for its own
Your brave migration out of Paradise;

Claims you, and guides you, too,
Three thousand miles across the summer's waste
Of blooms ye knew
Less finely fit for your ethereal taste.

To poets' youthful hearts,
  Even so the quivering April thoughts will fly,—
Those irised darts,
  Those winged and tiny denizens of the sky.

Through beaks as needle-fine,
  They suck a redder honey than bees know.
Unearthly wine
  Sleeps in this bloom; and, when it falls, they go.

LINES FOR A SUN-DIAL

WITH shadowy pen I write,
Till time be done,
Good news of some strange light,
Some far off sun.

THE REALMS OF GOLD

(Written after hearing a line of Keats repeated by a passing stranger under the palms of Southern California.)

UNDER the palms of San Diego
Where gold-skinned Mexicans loll at ease,
And the red half-moons of their black-pipped melons
Drop from their hands in the sunset seas,
And an incense, out of the old brown missions,
Blows through the orange trees;

I wished that a poet who died in Europe
Had found his way to this rose-red West;
That Keats had walked by the wide Pacific
And cradled his head on its healing breast,
And made new songs of the sun-burned sea-folk,
New poems, perhaps his best.

I thought of him, under the ripe pomegranates
At the desert's edge, where the grape-vines grow,
In a sun-kissed ranch between grey-green sage-brush
And amethyst mountains, peaked with snow,

Or watching the lights of the City of Angels
Glitter like stars below.

He should walk, at dawn, by the lemon orchards,
And breathe at ease in that dry bright air;
And the Spanish bells in their crumbling cloisters
Of brown adobe would sing to him there;
And the old Franciscans would bring him their baskets
Of apple and olive and pear.

And the mandolins, in the deep blue twilight,
Under that palm with the lion's mane,
Would pluck, once more, at his golden heart-strings,
And tell him the old sea-tales of Spain;
And there should the daughters of Hesperus teach him
Their mystical songs again.

Then, the dusk blew sweet over seas of peach-bloom;
The moon sailed white in the cloudless blue;
The tree-toads purred, and the crickets chirruped;
And better than anything dreamed came true;

For, under the murmuring palms, a shadow
  Passed, with the eyes I knew;

A shadow, perhaps, of the tall green fountains
  That rustled their fronds on that glittering sky,
A hungering shadow, a lean dark shadow,
  A dreaming shadow that drifted by;
But I heard him whisper the strange dark music
  That found it so "rich to die."

And the murmuring palms of San Diego
  Shook with stars as he passed beneath.
The Paradise palms, and the wild white orchards,
  The night, and its roses, were all one breath,
Bearing the song of a nightingale seaward,
  A song that had out-soared death.

COMPENSATIONS

NOT with a flash that rends the blue
Shall fall the avenging sword.
Gently as the evening dew
Descends the mighty Lord.

His dreadful balances are made
To move with moon and tide;
Yet shall not mercy be afraid
Nor justice be denied.

The dreams that seemed to waste away,
The kindliness forgot,
Were singing in your heart today
Although you knew them not.

The sun shall not forget his road,
Nor the high stars their rhyme,
The traveller with the heavier load
Has one less hill to climb.

And, though a darker shadow fall
  On every struggling age,
How shall it be if, after all,
  He share our pilgrimage?

The end we mourn is not the end.
  The dust has nimble wings.
But truth and beauty have a friend
  At the deep heart of things.

He will not speak? What friend belies
  His love with idle breath?
We read it in each others' eyes,
  And ask no more in death.

DEAD MAN'S MORRICE

THERE came a crowder to the Mermaid Inn,
One dark May night,
Fiddling a tune that quelled our motley din,
With quaint delight,
It haunts me yet, as old lost airs will do,
A phantom strain:
Look for me once, lest I should look for you,
And look in vain.

In that old wood, where ghosts of lovers walk,
At fall of day,
Gleaning such fragments of their ancient talk
As poor ghosts may,
From leaves that brushed their faces, wet with dew,
Or tears, or rain, . . .
Look for me once, lest I should look for you,
And look in vain.

Have we not seen them—pale forgotten shades
That do return,

Groping for those dim paths, those fragrant glades,
  Those nooks of fern,
Only to find that, of the may they knew,
  No wraiths remain;
Yet they still look, as I should look for you,
  And look in vain.

They see those happier ghosts that waned away—
  Whither, who knows?—
Ghosts that come back with music and the may,
  And Spring's first rose,
Lover and lass, to sing the old burden through,
  Stave and refrain:
Look for me once, lest I should look for you,
  And look in vain.

So, after death, if in that starless deep,
  I lose your eyes,
I'll haunt familiar places. I'll not keep
  Tryst in the skies.
I'll haunt the whispering elms that found us true,
  The old grass-grown lane.
Look for me there, lest I should look for you,
  And look in vain.

DEAD MAN'S MORRICE

There, as of old, under the dreaming moon,
A phantom throng
Floats through the fern, to a ghostly morrice tune,
A thin sweet song,
Hands link with hands, eyes drown in eyes anew,
Lips meet again. . . .
Look for me, once, lest I should look for you,
And look in vain.

THE OLD FOOL IN THE WOOD

"IF I could whisper you all I know,"
Said the Old Fool in the Wood,
"You'd never say that green leaves grow.
You'd say, 'Ah, what a happy mood
The Master must be in today,
To think such thoughts,'
That's what you'd say.

"If I could whisper you all I've heard,"
Said the Old Fool in the fern,
"You'd never say the song of a bird.
You'd say, 'I'll listen, and p'raps I'll learn
One word of His joy as He passed this way,
One syllable more,'
That's what you'd say."

"If I could tell you all the rest,"
Said the Old Fool under the skies,
"You'd hug your griefs against your breast
And whisper with love-lit eyes,
'I am one with the sorrow that made the may,
And the pulse of His heart,'
That's what you'd say."

A NEW MADRIGAL TO AN OLD MELODY

(It is supposed that Shadow-of-a-Leaf uses the word "clear" in a more ancient sense of "beautiful.")

AS along a dark pine-bough, in slender white mystery
The moon lay to listen, above the thick fern,
In a deep dreaming wood that is older than history
I heard a lad sing, and I stilled me to learn;
So rarely he lilted his long-forgot litany,—
Fall, April; fall, April, in dew on our dearth!
Bring balm, and bring poppy, bring deep sleepy dittany
For Marian, our clear May, so long laid in earth.

Then I drew back the branches. I saw him that chanted it.
I saw his fool's bauble. I knew his old grief.
I knew that old greenwood and the shadow that haunted it,—
My fool, my lost jester, my *Shadow-of-a-Leaf!*

And "why," I said, "why, all this while, have you
left me so
Luckless in melody, lonely in mirth?"
"Oh, why," he sang, "why has this world then
bereft me so
Soon of my Marian, so long laid in earth?

"In the years that are gone," he said, "love was
more fortunate.
Grief was our minstrel of things that endure.
Now, ashes and dust and this world grow im-
portunate.
Time has no sorrow that time cannot cure.
Once, we could lose, and the loss was worth
cherishing.
Now, we may win, but, O, where is the worth?
Memory and true love," he whispered, "are
perishing,
With Marian, our clear May, so long laid in
earth."

"Ah, no!" I said, "no! Since we grieve for our
grief again,
Touch the old strings! Let us try the old stave!

And memory may wake, like my *Shadow-of-a-Leaf* again,
Singing of hope, in the dark, by a grave."
So we sang it together—that long-forgot litany:—
Fall, April; fall, April; bring new grief to birth.
Bring wild herb of grace, and bring deep healing dittany,
For Marian, our clear May, so long laid in earth.

THE LOST BATTLE

IT is not over yet—the fight
Where those immortal dreamers failed.
They stormed the citadels of night
And the night praised them—and prevailed.
So long ago the cause was lost
We scarce distinguish friend from foe;
But—if the dead can help it most—
The armies of the dead will grow.

The world has all our banners now,
And filched our watchwords for its own.
The world has crowned the "rebel's" brow
And millions crowd his lordly throne.
The masks have altered. Names are names;
They praise the "truth" that is not true.
The "rebel" that the world acclaims
Is not the rebel Shelley knew.

We may not build that Commonweal.
We may not reach the goal we set.
But there's a flag they dare not steal.
Forward! It is not over yet.

We shall be dust and under dust
  Before we end that ancient wrong;
But here's a sword that cannot rust,
  And where's the death can touch a song?

So, when our bodies rot in earth
  The singing souls that once were ours,
Weaponed with light and helmed with mirth,
  Shall front the kingdoms and the powers.
The ancient lie is on its throne,
  And half the living still forget;
But, since the dead are all our own,
  Courage, it is not over yet.

RIDDLES OF MERLIN

AS I was walking
Alone by the sea,
"What is that whisper?"
Said Merlin to me.
"Only," I answered,
"The sigh of the wave"—
"Oh, no," replied Merlin,
" 'Tis the grass on your grave."

As I lay dreaming
In churchyard ground
"Listen," said Merlin,
"What is that sound?"
"The green grass is growing,"
I answered; but he
Chuckled, *"Oh, no!*
'Tis the sound of the sea."

As I went homeward
At dusk by the shore,

"*What is that crimson?*"
Said Merlin once more.
"Only the sun," I said.
"Sinking to rest"—
"*Sunset for East,*" he said,
"*Sunrise for West.*"

THE SYMPHONY

WONDER in happy eyes
Fades, fades away:
And the angel-coloured skies
Whisper farewell.

Loveliness over the strings of the heart may stray
In fugitive melodies;
But Oh, the hand of the Master must not stay,
Even for a breath;

For to prolong one joy, or even to dwell
On one rich chord of pain,
Beyond the pulse of the song, would untune heaven
And drown the stars in death.

So youth with its love-note dies;
And beauty fades in the air,
To make the master-symphony immortal,
And find new life and deeper wonder there.

PEACE

GIVE me the pulse of the tide again
And the slow lapse of the leaves,
The rustling gold of a field of grain
And a bird in the nested eaves;

And a fishing-smack in the old harbour
Where all was happy and young;
And an echo or two of the songs I knew
When songs could still be sung.

For I would empty my heart of all
This world's implacable roar,
And I would turn to my home, and fall
Asleep in my home once more;

And I would forget what the cities say,
And the folly of all the wise,
And turn to my own true folk this day,
And the love in their constant eyes.

There is peace, peace, where the sea-birds wheel,
And peace in the breaking wave;
And I have a broken heart to heal,
And a broken soul to save.

THE OPEN DOOR

O MYSTERY of life,
That, after all our strife,
Defeats, mistakes,
Just as, at last, we see
The road to victory,
The tired heart breaks.

Just as the long years give
Knowledge of how to live,
Life's end draws near;
As if, that gift being ours,
God needed our new powers
In worlds elsewhere.

There, if the soul whose wings
Were won in suffering, springs
To life anew,
Justice would have some room
For hope beyond the tomb,
And mercy, too.

And since, without this dream
No light, no faintest gleam
  Answers our "why";
But earth and all its race
Must pass and leave no trace
  On that blind sky;

Shall reason close that door
On all we struggled for,
  Seal the soul's doom;
Make of this universe
One wild answering curse,
  One lampless tomb?

Mine be the dream, the creed
That leaves for God, indeed,
  For God, and man,
One open door whereby
To prove His world no lie
  And crown His plan.

IMMORTAL SAILS

NOW, in a breath, we'll burst those gates of gold,
And ransack heaven before our moment fails.
Now, in a breath, before we, too, grow old,
We'll mount and sing and spread immortal sails.

It is not time that makes eternity.
Love and an hour may quite out-run the years,
And give us more to hear and more to see
Than life can wash away with all its tears.

Dear, when we part, at last, that sunset sky
Shall not be touched with deeper hues than this;
But we shall ride the lightning ere we die
And seize our brief infinitude of bliss,

With time to spare for all that heaven can tell,
While eyes meet eyes, and look their last farewell.

THE MATIN-SONG OF FRIAR TUCK

I.

IF souls could sing to heaven's high King
As blackbirds pipe on earth,
How those delicious courts would ring
With gusts of lovely mirth!
What white-robed throng could lift a song
So mellow with righteous glee
As this brown bird that all day long
Delights my hawthorn tree.
Hark! That's the thrush
With speckled breast
From yon white bush
Chaunting his best,
Te Deum! Te Deum laudamus!

II.

If earthly dreams be touched with gleams
Of Paradisal air,
Some wings, perchance, of earth may glance
Around our slumbers there;

Some breaths of may might drift our way
With scents of leaf and loam,
Some whistling bird at dawn be heard
From those old woods of home.
Hark! That's the thrush
With speckled breast
From yon white bush
Chaunting his best,
Te Deum! Te Deum laudamus!

III.

No King or priest shall mar my feast
Where'er my soul may range.
I have no fear of heaven's good cheer
Unless our Master change.
But when death's night is dying away,
If I might choose my bliss,
My love should say, at break of day,
With her first waking kiss:—
Hark! That's the thrush
With speckled breast,
From yon white bush
Chaunting his best,
Te Deum! Te Deum laudamus!

FIVE CRITICISMS

I.

(On many recent novels by the conventional unconventionalists.)

OLD PANTALOON, lean-witted, dour and rich,
After grim years of soul-destroying greed,
Weds Columbine, that April-blooded witch
"Too young" to know that gold was not her need.

Then enters Pierrot, young, rebellious, warm,
With well-lined purse, to teach the fine-souled wife
That the old fool's gold should aid a world-reform
(Confused with sex). This wrecks the old fool's life.

O, there's no doubt that Pierrot was clever,
Quick to break hearts and quench the dying flame;

But why, for his own pride, does Pierrot never
Choose his own mate, work for his own high aim,

Stand on his feet, and pay for his own tune?
Why scold, cheat, rob and kill poor Pantaloon?

II.

(*On a certain goddess, acclaimed as "new" but known in Babylon.*)

I SAW the assembled artists of our day
Waiting for light, for music and for song.
A woman stood before them, fresh as May
And beautiful; but, in that modish throng,

None heeded her. They said, "In our first youth
Surely, long since, your hair was touched with grey."
"I do not change," she answered. "I am Truth."
"Old and banal," they sneered, and turned away.

Then came a formless thing, with breasts dyed scarlet.
The roses in her hair were green and blue.
"I am new," she said. "I change, and Death knows why."

Then with the eyes and gesture of a harlot
She led them all forth, whinneying, "New,
how new!
Tell us your name!" She answered, "The
New Lie."

III.

(*On Certain of the Bolsheviki "Idealists."*)

WITH half the force and thought you waste
in rage
Over your neighbor's house, or heart of
stone,
You might have built your own new heritage,
O fools, have you no hands, then, of your own?

Where is your pride? Is this your answer still,
This the red flag that burns above our strife,
This the new cry that rings from Pisgah hill,
"Our neighbor's money, or our neighbor's life"?

Be prouder. Let us build that nobler state
With our own hands, with our own muscle and
brain!
Your very victories die in hymns of hate;
And your own envies are your heaviest chain.

Is there no rebel proud enough to say
"We'll stand on our own feet, and win the day"?

IV.

(On Certain Realists.)

YOU with the quick sardonic eye
For all the mockeries of life,
Beware, in this dark masque of things that seem,
Lest even that tragic irony,
Which you discern in this our mortal strife,
Trick you and trap you, also, with a dream.

Last night I saw a dead man borne along
The city streets, passing a boisterous throng
That never ceased to laugh and shout and dance:
And yet, and yet,
For all the poison bitter minds might brew
From themes like this, I knew
That the stern Truth would not permit her glance
Thus to be foiled by flying straws of chance,
For her keen eyes on deeper skies are set,
And laws that tragic ironists forget.

She saw the dead man's life, from birth to death,—
All that he knew of love and sin and pain,
Success and failure (not as this world sees),
His doubts, his passions, inner loss and gain,

And borne on darker tides of constant law
Beyond the margin of this life she saw
All that had left his body with the breath.
These things, to her, were still realities.

If any mourned for him unseen,
She saw them, too.
If none, she'd not pretend
His clay were colder, or his God less true,
Or that his grave, at length, would be less green.
She'd not deny
The boundless depths of her eternal sky
Brooding above a boundless universe,
Because he seemed to man's unseeing eye
Going a little further to fare worse;
Nor would she assume he lacked that unseen friend
Whom even the tragic ironists declare
Were better than the seen, in his last end.

Oh, then, beware, beware,
Lest in the strong name of "reality"
You mock yourselves anew with shapes of air,
Lest it be you, agnostics, who re-write
The fettering creeds of night,
Affirm you know your own Unknowable,
And lock the winged soul in a new hell;

Lest it be you, lip-worshippers of Truth,
Who break the heart of youth;
Lest it be you, the realists, who fight
With shadows, and forget your own pure light;
Lest it be you who, with a little shroud
Snatched from the sightless faces of the dead,
Hoodwink the world, and keep the mourner bowed
In dust, real dust, with stones, real stones, for bread;
Lest, as you look one eighth of an inch beneath
The yellow skin of death,
You dream yourselves discoverers of the skull
That old *memento mori* of our faith;
Lest it be you who hunt a flying wraith
Through this dissolving stuff of hill and cloud;
Lest it be you, who, at the last, annul
Your covenant with your kind;
Lest it be you who darken heart and mind,
Sell the strong soul in bondage to a dream,
And fetter us once more to things that seem

V

(*An Answer*)

[After reading an article in a leading London journal by an "intellectual" who attacked one of the noblest poets and greatest artists of a former century (or any century) on the ground that his high ethical standards were incompatible with the new lawlessness. This vicious lawlessness the writer described definitely, and he paid his tribute to dishonour as openly and brutally as any of the Bolsheviki could have done. I had always known that this was the real ground of the latter-day onslaught on some of the noblest literature of the past; but I had never seen it openly confessed before. The time has now surely come when, if our civilization is to make any fight at all against the new "red ruin and breaking up of laws," we must cease to belaud our slack-minded, latter-day "literature of rebellion" for its cleverness in making scraps of paper out of the plain laws of right and wrong. It has been doing this for more than twenty-five years, and the same has become fashionable among those who are too busy to read carefully or understand fully what pitfalls are being prepared for their own feet and the feet of their children.]

I

IF this were true, England indeed were dead.
If the wild fashion of that poisonous hour
Wherein the new Salome, clothed with power,
Wriggled and hissed, with hands and feet so red,
Should even now demand that glorious head,
Whose every word was like an English flower,
Whose every song an English April shower,
Whose every thought immortal wine and bread;
If this were true, if England should prefer
Darkness, corruption, and the adulterous crew,

Shakespeare and Browning would cry shame on
her,
And Milton would deny the land he knew;
And those who died in Flanders yesterday
Would thank their God they sleep in cleaner clay.

II

It is not true. Only these "rebel" wings,
These glittering clouds of "intellectual" flies
Out of the stagnant pools of midnight rise
From the old dead creeds, with carrion-poisoned
stings
They strike at noble and ignoble things,
Immortal Love with the old world's out-worn
lies,
But even now, a wind from clearer skies
Dissolves in smoke their coteries and wings.

See, their divorced idealist re-divorces
The wife he stole from his own stealing friend!
And *these* would pluck the high stars from their
courses,
And mock the fools that praise them, till the
end!

Well, let the whole world praise them. Truth can
wait
Till our new England shall unlock the gate.

III

Yes. Let the fools go paint themselves with woad,
For we've a jest between us, Truth and I.
We know that those who live by fashion die
Also by fashion, and that mode kills mode.
We know the great new age is on the road,
And death is at the heart of every lie.
But we've a jest between us, Truth and I.
And we have locked the doors to our abode.

Yet if some great new "rebel" in his pride
Should pass that way and hear us laughing low
Like lovers, in the darkness, side by side,
He might catch this:—"The dullards do not
know
That names are names. New 'rebel' is old
'thrall.' "
And we're the lonely dreamers after all.

THE COMPANIONS

HOW few are they that voyage through the night
On that eternal quest,
For that strange light beyond our light,
That rest beyond our rest.

And they who, seeking beauty, once descry
Her face, to most unknown;
Thenceforth like changelings from the sky
Must walk their road alone.

So once I dreamed. So idle was my mood;
But now, before these eyes,
From those foul trenches, black with blood,
What radiant legions rise!

And loveliness over the wounded earth awakes
Like wild-flowers in the Spring.
Out of the mortal chrysalis breaks
Immortal wing on wing.

They rise like flowers, they wander on wings of light,
Through realms beyond our ken.
The loneliest soul is companied tonight
By hosts of unknown men.

THE LITTLE ROADS

THE great roads are all grown over
That seemed so firm and white.
The deep black forests have covered them.
How should I walk aright?
How should I thread these tangled mazes,
Or grope to that far off light?
I stumble round the thickets, and they turn me
Back to the thickets and the night.

Yet, sometimes, at a word, an elfin pass-word,
(O, thin, deep, sweet with beaded rain!)
There shines, through a mist of ragged-robins,
The old lost April-coloured lane,
That leads me from myself; for, at a whisper,
Where the strong limbs thrust in vain,
At a breath, if my heart help another heart,
The path shines out for me again.

A thin thread, a rambling lane for lovers
To the light of the world's one May,

Where the white dropping flakes may wet our faces
  As we lift them to the bloom-bowed spray:
O Master, shall we ask Thee, then, for high-roads,
  Or down upon our knees and pray
That Thou wilt ever lose us in Thy little lanes,
  And lead us by a wandering way.

SUNLIGHT AND SEA

GIVE me the sunlight and the sea
And who shall take my heaven from me?

Light of the Sun, Life of the Sun,
O happy, bold companion,
Whose golden laughters round me run,
Making wine of the blue air
With wild-rose kisses everywhere,
Browning the limb, flushing the cheek,
Apple-fragrant, leopard-sleek,
Dancing from thy red-curtained East
Like a Nautch-girl to my feast,
Proud because her lord, the Spring,
Praised the way those anklets ring;
Or wandering like a white Greek maid
Leaf-dappled through the dancing shade,
Where many a green-veined leaf imprints
Breast and limb with emerald tints,
That softly net her silken shape
But let the splendour still escape,

While rosy ghosts of roses flow
Over the supple rose and snow.

But sweetest, fairest is thy face,
When we meet, when we embrace,
Where the white sand sleeps at noon
Round that lonely blue lagoon,
Fringed with one white reef of coral
Where the sea-birds faintly quarrel
And the breakers on the reef
Fade into a dream of grief,
And the palm-trees overhead
Whisper that all grief is dead.

Sister Sunlight, lead me then
Into thy healing seas again . . .
For when we swim out, side by side,
Like a lover with his bride,
When thy lips are salt with brine,
And thy wild eyes flash in mine,
The music of a mightier sea
Beats with my blood in harmony.
I breast the primal flood of being,
Too clear for speech, too near for seeing;

And to his heart, new reconciled,
The Eternal takes his earth-bound child.

Who the essential secret spells
In those gigantic syllables,—
Flowing, ebbing, ebbing, flowing,—
Gathers wisdom past all knowing.
Song of the Sea, I hear, I hear,
That deeper music of the sphere,
Catch the rhythm of sun and star,
And know what light and darkness are;
Ay, faint beginnings of a rhyme
That swells beyond the tides of time;
Beat with thy rhythm in blood and breath,
And make one song of life and death.
I hear, I hear, and rest content,
Merged in the primal element,
The old element whence life arose,
The fount of youth, to which it goes.

Give me the sunlight and the sea
And who shall take my heaven from me?

THE ROAD THROUGH CHAOS

I.

THERE is one road, one only, to the Light:
A narrow way, but Freedom walks therein;
A straight, firm road through Chaos and old Night,
And all these wandering Jack-o-Lents of Sin.

It is the road of Law, where Pilate stays
To hear, at last, the answer to his cry;
And mighty sages, groping through their maze
Of eager questions, hear a child reply.

Truth? What is Truth? Come, look upon my tables.
Begin at your beginnings once again.
Twice one is two! Though all the rest be fables,
Here's one poor glimpse of Truth to keep you sane.

For Truth, at first, is clean accord with fact,
Whether in line or thought, or word, or act.

II.

Then, by those first, those clean, precise, accords,
  Build to the Lord your temples and your song;
The curves of beauty, music's wedded chords
  Resolving into heaven all hate and wrong.

Let harmonies of colour marry and follow
  And breaking waves in a rhythmic dance ensue;
And all your thought fly free as the wings of the swallow,
  Whose arrowy curves obey their measure, too.

Then shall the marching stars and tides befriend you,
  And your own heart, and the world's heart, pulse in rhyme;
Then shall the mob of the passions that would rend you
  Crown you their Captain and march on in time.

So shall you repossess your struggling soul,
Conquer your world, and find the eternal goal.

THE NIGHT OF THE LION

"And that a reply be received before midnight."
British Ultimatum.

THEIR Day was at twelve of the night,
When the graves give up their dead.
And still, from the City, no light
Yellows the clouds overhead.
Where the Admiral stands there's a star,
But his column is lost in the gloom;
For the brazen doors are ajar,
And the Lion awakes, and the doom.

He is not of a chosen race.
His strength is the strength of the skies,
In whose glory all nations have place,
In whose downfall Liberty dies.
He is mighty, but he is just.
He shall live to the end of years.
He shall bring the proud to the dust.
He shall raise the weak to the spheres.

THE NIGHT OF THE LION

It is night on the world's great mart,
  But the brooding hush is awake
With the march of a steady heart
  That calls like the drum of Drake,
Come! And a muttering deep
  As the pulse of the distant guns,
Or the thunder before the leap
  Thro' the rolling thoroughfare runs.

And the wounded men go by
  Like thoughts in the Lion's brain.
And the clouds lift on high
  Like the slow waves of his mane
And the narrowing lids conceal
  The furnaces of his eyes.
Their gold is gone out. They reveal
Only two search-lights of steel
  Steadily sweeping the skies.

And we hoped he had peace in his lair
  Where the bones of old tyrannies lay,
And the skulls that his cubs have stripped bare,
  The old skulls they still toss in their play.

But the tyrants are risen again,
And the last light dies from their path;
For the midnight of his mane
Lifts to the stars with his wrath.

From the East to the West he is crouching.
He snuffs at the North-East wind.
His breast upon Britain is couching.
His haunches quiver on Ind.
It is night, black night, where he lies;
But a kingdom and a fleet
Shall burn in his terrible eyes
When he leaps, and the darkness dies
With the War-gods under his feet.

Till the day when a little child,
Shall lay but a hand on his mane,
And his eyes grow golden and mild
And he stands in the heavens again;
Till the day of the seventh seal,
Which the Lion alone shall rend,
When the stars from their courses reel,
His Freedom shall not end.

THE WAR WIDOW

I.

BLACK-VEILED, black-gowned, she rides in bus and train,
With eyes that fill too listlessly for tears.
Her waxen hands clasp and unclasp again.
Good News, they cry. She neither sees nor hears.

Good News, perhaps, may crown some far-off king.
Good News may peal the glory of the state—
Good News may cause the courts of heaven to ring.
She sees a hand waved at a garden gate.

For her dull ears are tuned to other themes;
And her dim eyes can never see aright.
She glides—a ghost—through all her April dreams,
To meet his eyes at dawn, his lips at night.

Wraiths of a truth that others never knew;
And yet—for her—the only truth that's true.

II.

Good News! Good News! There is no way but this.
Out of the night a star begins to rise.
I know not where my soul's deep Master is;
Nor can I hear those angels in the skies;

Nor follow him, as childhood used of old,
By radiant seas, in those time-hallowed tales.
Only, at times, implacable and cold,
From this blind gloom, stand out the iron nails.

Yet, at this world's heart stands the Eternal Cross,
The ultimate frame of moon and star and sun,
Where Love with out-stretched arms, in utter loss,
Points East and West and makes the whole world one.

Good News! Good News! There is no hope, no way,
No truth, no life, but leads through Christmas Day.

THE BELL

THE Temple Bell was out of tune,
That once out-melodied sun and moon.

Instead of calling folk to prayer
It spread an evil in the air.

Instead of a song, from north to south,
It put a lie in the wind's mouth.

The very palms beneath it died,
So harsh it jarred, so loud it lied.

Then the gods told the blue-robed bonze:
"*Your Bell is only wrought of bronze.*

Lower it down, cast it again,
Or you shall shake the heavens in vain."

Then, as the mighty cauldron hissed,
Men brought the wealth that no man missed.

Yea, they brought silver, they brought gold,
And melted them into the seething mould.

The miser brought his greening hoard,
And the king cast in his sword.

Yet, when the Bell in the Temple swung,
It jarred the stars with its harsh tongue.

"*Is this your best?*" the oracle said,
"*Then were you better drunk or dead.*"

Once again they melted it down,
And the king cast in his crown.

Then they poured wine, and bullock's blood,
Into the hot, grey, seething flood.

They gave it mellowing fruits to eat,
And honey-combs to make it sweet.

Yet, when they hauled it to the sky,
The Bell was one star-shattering lie.

So, for the third time and the last,
They lowered it down to be re-cast.

The white-hot metal seethed anew,
And the crowd shrank as the heat grew;

But a white-robed woman, queenly and tall,
Pressed to the brink before them all,

One breast, like a golden fruit lay bare;
She held her small son feeding there.

She plucked him off, she lifted him high,
Like rose-red fruit on the blue sky.

She pressed her lips to the budded feet,
And murmured softly, "*Oh, sweet, my sweet.*"

She whispered, "*Gods, that my land may live,*
I give the best that I have to give!"

Then, then, before the throng awoke,
Before one cry from their white lips broke,

She tossed him into the fiery flood,
Her child, her baby, her flesh and blood.

And the crisp hissing waves closed round
And melted him through without a sound.

"*Too quick for pain,*" they heard her say,
And she sobbed, once, and she turned away.

* * * * * * *

The Temple Bell, in peace and war,
Keeps the measure of sun and star.

But sometimes, in the night it cries
Faintly, and a voice replies:

Mother, Oh, mother, the Bell rings true!—
You were all that I had!—Oh, mother, my mother!—
With the land and the Bell it is well. Is it well,
Is it well with the heart that had you and none other?

SLAVE AND EMPEROR

"Our cavalry have rescued Nazareth from the enemy whose supermen described Christianity as a creed for slaves."

THE Emperor mocked at Nazareth
In his almighty hour.
The Slave that bowed himself to death
And walked with slaves in Nazareth,
What were his words but wasted breath
Before that "will to power"?

Yet, in the darkest hour of all,
When black defeat began,
The Emperor heard the mountains quake,
He felt the graves beneath him shake,
He watched his legions rally and break,
And he whimpered as they ran.

"I hear a shout that moves the earth,
A cry that wakes the dead!
Will no one tell me whence they come,
For all my messengers are dumb?
What power is this that comes to birth
And breaks my power?" he said.

Then, all around his foundering guns,
Though dawn was now not far,
The darkness filled with a living fear
That whispered at the Emperor's ear,
"*The armies of the dead draw near*
Beneath an eastern star."

The trumpet blows in Nazareth.
The Slave is risen again.
Across the bitter wastes of death
The horsemen ride from Nazareth,
And the Power we mocked as wasted breath
Returns, in power, to reign;
Rides on, in white, through Nazareth,
To save His world again.

ON A MOUNTAIN TOP

ON this high altar, fringed with ferns
That darken against the sky,
The dawn in lonely beauty burns
And all our evils die.

The struggling sea that roared below
Is quieter than the dew,
Quieter than the clouds that flow
Across the stainless blue.

On this bare crest, the angels kneel
And breathe the sweets that rise
From flowers too little to reveal
Their beauty to our eyes.

I have seen Edens on the earth
With queenly blooms arrayed;
But here the fairest come to birth,
The smallest flowers He made.

O, high above the sounding pine,
And richer, sweeter far,

ON A MOUNTAIN-TOP

The wild thyme wakes. The celandine
  Looks at the morning star.

They may not see the heavens unfold.
  They breathe no out-worn prayer;
But, on a mountain, as of old,
  His glory fills the air.

EARLY POEMS

(Not Published Hitherto in America)

THE PHANTOM FLEET

(1904)

THE sunset lingered in the pale green West:
In rosy wastes the low soft evening star
Woke; while the last white sea-mew sought for rest;
And tawny sails came stealing o'er the bar.

But, in the hillside cottage, through the panes
The light streamed like a thin far trumpet-call,
And quickened, as with quivering battle-stains,
The printed ships that decked the parlour wall.

From oaken frames old admirals looked down:
They saw the lonely slumberer at their feet:
They saw the paper, headed *Talk from Town;*
Our rusting trident, and our phantom fleet:

And from a neighbouring tavern surged a song
Of England laughing in the face of war,
With eyes unconquerably proud and strong,
And lips triumphant from her Trafalgar.

But he, the slumberer in that glimmering room,
Saw distant waters glide and heave and gleam;
Around him in the softly coloured gloom
The pictures clustered slowly to a dream.

He saw how England, resting on her past,
Among the faded garlands of her dead,
Woke; for a whisper reached her heart at last,
And once again she raised her steel-clad head.

Her eyes were filled with sudden strange alarms;
She heard the westering waters change and chime;
She heard the distant tumult of her arms
Defeated, not by courage, but by Time.

Knowledge had made a deadlier pact with death,
Nor strength nor steel availed against that bond:
Slowly approached—and Britain held her breath—
The battle booming from the deeps beyond.

O, then what darkness rolled upon the wind,
Threatening the torch that Britain held on high?
Where all her navies, baffled, broken, blind,
Slunk backward, snarling in their agony!
Who guards the gates of Freedom now? The cry

Stabbed heaven! *England, the shattered ramparts fall!*
Then, like a trumpet shivering through the sky
O, like white lightning rending the black pall
Of heaven, an answer pealed: *Her dead shall hear that call.*

Then came a distant light of great waves breaking
That brought the sunset on each crumbling crest,
A rumour as of buried ages waking,
And mighty spirits rising from their rest;
Then ghostly clouds arose, with billowing breast,
White clouds that turned to sails upon their way,
Red clouds that burned like flags against the West,
Till even the conquering fleet in silence lay
Dazed with that strange old light, and night grew bright as day.

We come to fight for Freedom! The great East
Heard, and was rent asunder like a veil.
Host upon host out of the night increased
Its towering clouds and crowded zones of sail:
England, our England, canst thou faint or fail?

We come to fight for Freedom yet once more!
This, this is ours at least! Count the great tale
Of all these dead that rise to guard thy shore
By right of the red life they never feared to pour.

We come to fight for Freedom! On they came,
One cloud of beauty sweeping the wild sea;
And there, through all their thousands, flashed like flame
That star-born signal of the Victory:
Duty, that deathless lantern of the free;
Duty, that makes a god of every man.
And there was Nelson, watching silently
As through the phantom fleet the message ran;
And his tall frigate rushed before the stormy van.

Nelson, our Nelson, frail and maimed and blind,
Stretched out his dead cold face against the foe:
And England's Raleigh followed hard behind,
With all his eager fighting heart aglow;
Glad, glad for England's sake once more to know
The old joy of battle and contempt of pain;
Glad, glad to die, if England willed it so,

The traitor's and the coward's death again;
But hurl the world back now as once he hurled
back Spain.

And there were all those others, Drake and Blake,
Rodney and Howard, Byron, Collingwood;
With deathless eyes aflame for England's sake,
As on their ancient decks they proudly stood,—
Decks washed of old with England's purplest
blood;
And there, once more, each rushing oaken side
Bared its dark-throated, thirsty, gleaming brood
Of cannon, watched by laughing lads who died
Long, long ago for England and her ancient pride.

We come to fight for England! The great sea
In a wild light of song began to break
Round that tall phantom of the Victory
And all the foam was music in her wake:
Ship after phantom ship, with guns a-rake
And shot-rent flags a-stream from every mast
Moved in a deepening splendour, not to make
A shield for England of her own dead past;
But, with a living dream to arm her soul at last.

We come to die for England: through the hush
Of gathered nations rose that regal cry,
From naked oaken walls one word could crush
If those vast armoured throats dared to reply:
But there the most implacable enemy
Felt his eyes fill with gladder, prouder tears,
As Nelson's calm eternal face went by,
Gazing beyond all perishable fears
To some diviner goal above the waste of years.

Through the hushed fleets the vision streamed away,
Then slowly turned once more to that deep West,
While voices cried, O, England, the new day
Is dawning, but thy soul can take no rest.

Thy freedom and thy peace are only thine
By right of toil on every land and sea
And by that crimson sacrificial wine
Of thine own heart and thine own agony.

Peace is not slumber. Peace, in every hour,
Throbs like the heart of music. This alone

Can save thy heritage and confirm that power
  Whereof the past is but the cushioned throne.

Look to the fleet! Again and yet again,
  Hear us who storm thy heart with this one cry.
Hear us, who cannot help, though fair and fain,
  To hold thy seas before thee, and to die.

Look to the fleet! Thy fleet, the first, last line:
  The sword of Liberty, her strength, her shield,
Her food, her life-blood! Britain, it is thine,
  Here, now, to hold that birth-right, or to yield.

So, through the dark, those phantom ships of old
  Faded, it seemed, through mists of blood and
    tears.
Sails turned to clouds, and slowly westward rolled
  The sad returning pageant of the years.
On tides of light, where all our tumults cease,
  Through that rich West, the Victory returned;
And all the waves around her whispered "peace,"
  And from her mast no battle-message burned.

Like clouds, like fragments of those fading skies,
  The pageant passed, with all its misty spars,

While the hushed nations raised their dreaming
eyes
To that great light which brings the end of wars.

Ship after ship, in some strange glory drowned,
Cloud after cloud, was lost in that deep light
Each with a sovran stillness haloed round.
Then—that high fleet of stars led on the night.

MICHAEL OAKTREE

UNDER an arch of glorious leaves I passed
Out of the wood and saw the sickle moon
Floating in daylight o'er the pale green sea.

It was the quiet hour before the sun
Gathers the clouds to prayer and silently
Utters his benediction on the waves
That whisper round the death-bed of the day.
The labourers were returning from the farms
And children danced to meet them. From the doors
Of cottages there came a pleasant clink
Where busy hands laid out the evening meal.
From smouldering elms around the village spire
There soared and sank the caw of gathering rooks.
The faint-flushed clouds were listening to the tale
The sea tells to the sunset with one sigh.
The last white wistful sea-bird sought for peace,
And the last fishing-boat stole o'er the bar,
And fragrant grasses, murmuring a prayer,

Bowed all together to the holy west,
Bowed all together thro' the golden hush,
The breathing hush, the solemn scented hush,
The holy, holy hush of eventide.

And, in among the ferns that crowned the hill
With waving green and whispers of the wind,
A boy and girl, carelessly linking hands,
Into their golden dream drifted away.
On that rich afternoon of scent and song
Old Michael Oaktree died. It was not much
He wished for; but indeed I think he longed
To see the light of summer once again
Blossoming o'er the far blue hills. I know
He used to like his rough-hewn wooden bench
Placed in the sun outside the cottage door
Where in the listening stillness he could hear,
Across the waving gilly-flowers that crowned
His crumbling garden wall, the long low sigh
Of supreme peace that whispers to the hills
The sacred consolation of the sea.
He did not hope for much: he longed to live
Until the winter came again, he said;
But on the last sweet eve of May he died.

MICHAEL OAKTREE

I wandered sadly through the dreaming lanes
Down to the cottage on that afternoon;
For I had known old Michael Oaktree now
So many years, so many happy years.
When I was little he had carried me
High on his back to see the harvest home,
And given me many a ride upon his wagon
Among the dusty scents of sun and hay.
He showed me how to snare the bulky trout
That lurked under the bank of yonder brook.
Indeed, he taught me many a country craft,
For I was apt to learn, and, as I learnt,
I loved the teacher of that homely lore.
Deep in my boyish heart he shared the glad
Influence of the suns and winds and waves,
Giving my childhood what it hungered for—
The rude earth-wisdom of the primal man.

He had retained his childhood: Death for him
Had no more terror than his bed. He walked
With wind and sunlight like a brother, glad
Of their companionship and mutual aid.
We, toilers after truth, are weaned too soon
From earth's dark arms and naked barbarous breast.

Too soon, too soon, we leave the golden feast,
Fetter the dancing limbs and pluck the crown
Of roses from the dreaming brow. We pass
Our lives in most laborious idleness.
For we have lost the meaning of the world;
We have gone out into the night too soon;
We have mistaken all the means of grace
And over-rated our small power to learn.
And the years move so swiftly over us:
We have so little time to live in worlds
Unrealised and unknown realms of joy,
We are so old before we learn how vain
Our effort was, how fruitlessly we cast
Our Bread upon the waters, and how weak
Our hearts were, but our chance desires how strong!
Then, in the dark, our sense of light decays;
We cannot cry to God as once we cried!
Lost in the gloom, our faith, perhaps our love,
Lies dead with years that never can return.

But Michael Oaktree was a man whose love
Had never waned through all his eighty years.
His faith was hardly faith. He seemed a part

Of all that he believed in. He had lived
In constant conversation with the sun,
The wind, the silence and the heart of peace;
In absolute communion with the Power
That rules all action and all tides of thought,
And all the secret courses of the stars;
The Power that still establishes on earth
Desire and worship, through the radiant laws
Of Duty, Love and Beauty; for through these
As through three portals of the self-same gate
The soul of man attains infinity,
And enters into Godhead. So he gained
On earth a fore-taste of Nirvana, not
The void of eastern dream, but the desire
And goal of all of us, whether thro' lives
Innumerable, by slow degrees, we near
The death divine, or from this breaking body
Of earthly death we flash at once to God.
Through simple love and simple faith, this man
Attained a height above the hope of kings.

Yet, as I softly shut the little gate
And walked across the garden, all the scents
Of mingling blossom ached like inmost pain

Deep in my heart, I know not why. They seemed
Distinct, distinct as distant evening bells
Tolling, over the sea, a secret chime
That breaks and breaks and breaks upon the heart
In sorrow rather than in sound, a chime
Strange as a streak of sunset to the moon,
Strange as a rose upon a starlit grave,
Strange as a smile upon a dead man's lips;
A chime of melancholy, mute as death
But strong as love, uttered in plangent tones
Of honeysuckle, jasmine, gilly-flowers,
Jonquils and aromatic musky leaves,
Lilac and lilies to the rose-wreathed porch.

At last I tapped and entered and was drawn
Into the bedroom of the dying man,
Who lay, propped up with pillows, quietly
Gazing; for through his open casement far
Beyond the whispers of the gilly-flowers
He saw the mellow light of eventide
Hallow the west once more; and, as he gazed,
I think I never saw so great a peace
On any human face. There was no sound
Except the slumbrous pulsing of a clock,

The whisper of the garden and, far off,
The sacred consolation of the sea.

His wife sat at his bed-side: she had passed
Her eightieth year; her only child was dead.
She had been wedded more than sixty years,
And she sat gazing with the man she loved
Quietly, out into that unknown Deep.

A butterfly floated into the room
And back again, pausing awhile tc bask
And wink its painted fans on the warm sill;
A bird piped in the roses and there came
Into the childless mother's ears a sound
Of happy laughing children, far away.

Then Michael Oaktree took his wife's thin hand
Between his big rough hands. His eyes grew dark,
And, as he turned to her and died, he spoke
Two words of perfect faith and love—*Come soon!*

O then in all the world there was no sound
Except the slumbrous pulsing of a clock,
The whisper of the leaves and far away,
The infinite compassion of the sea.

But, as I softly passed out of the porch
And walked across the garden, all the scents
Of mingling blossoms ached like inmost joy,
Distinct no more, but like one heavenly choir
Pealing one mystic music, still and strange
As voices of the holy Seraphim,
One voice of adoration, mute as love,
Stronger than death, and pure with wedded tones
Of honeysuckle, jasmine, gilly-flowers,
Jonquils and aromatic musky leaves,
Lilac and lilies to the garden gate.

O then indeed I knew how closely knit
To stars and flowers we are, how many means
Of grace there are for those that never lose
Their sense of membership in this divine
Body of God; for those that all their days
Have walked in quiet communion with the Life
That keeps the common secret of the sun,
The wind, the silence and the heart of man.
There is one God, one Love, one everlasting
Mystery of Incarnation, one creative
Passion behind the many-coloured veil.

We have obscured God's face with partial truths,
The cause of all our sorrow and sin, our wars
Of force and thought, in this unheavened world.
Yet, by the battle of our partial truths,
The past against the present and the swift
Moment of passing joy against the deep
Eternal love, ever the weaker truth
Falls to the stronger, till once more we near
The enfolding splendour of the whole. Our God
Has been too long a partial God. We are all
Made in His image, men and birds and beasts,
Mountains and clouds and cataracts and suns,
With those great Beings above our little world,
A height beyond for every depth below,
Those long-forgotten Princedoms, Virtues, Powers,
Existences that live and move in realms
As far beyond our thought as Europe lies
With all its little arts and sciences
Beyond the comprehension of the worm.
We are all partial images, we need
What lies beyond us to complete our souls;
Therefore our souls are filled with a desire
And love which lead us towards the Infinity
Of Godhead that awaits us each and all.

Peacefully through the dreaming lanes I went.
The sun sank, and the birds were hushed. The
stars
Trembled like blossoms in the purple trees.
But, as I paused upon the whispering hill
The mellow light still lingered in the west,
And dark and soft against that rosy depth
A boy and girl stood knee-deep in the ferns.
Dreams of the dead man's youth were in my heart,
Yet I was very glad; and as the moon
Brightened, they kissed; and, linking hand in hand,
Down to their lamp-lit home drifted away.

Under an arch of leaves, into the gloom
I went along the little woodland road,
And through the breathless hedge of hawthorn
heard
Out of the deepening night, the long low sigh
Of supreme peace that whispers to the hills
The sacrament and sabbath of the sea.

TOUCHSTONE ON A BUS

TOUCHSTONE ON A BUS

LAST night I rode with Touchstone on a bus
From Ludgate Hill to World's End. It was he!
Despite the broadcloth and the bowler hat,
I knew him, Touchstone, the wild flower of folly,
The whetstone of his age, the scourge of kings,
The madcap morning star of elfin-land,
Who used to wrap his legs around his neck
For warmth on winter nights. He had slipped back,
To see what men were doing in a world
That should be wiser. He had watched a play,
Read several books, heard men discourse of art
And life; and he sat bubbling like a spring
In Arden. Never did blackbird, drenched with may,
Chuckle as Touchstone chuckled on that ride.
Lord, what a world! Lord, what a mad, mad world!
Then, to the jolt and jingle of the engine,
He burst into this bunch of mad-cap rhymes:—

I

THE NEW DUCKLING

"I WANT to be new," said the duckling.
"O, ho!" said the wise old owl,
While the guinea-hen cluttered off chuckling
To tell all the rest of the fowl.

"I should like a more elegant figure,"
That child of a duck went on.
"I should like to grow bigger and bigger,
Until I could swallow a swan.

"I *won't* be the bond slave of habit,
I *won't* have these webs on my toes.
I want to run round like a rabbit,
A rabbit as red as a rose.

"I *don't* want to waddle like mother,
Or quack like my silly old dad.
I want to be utterly other,
And *frightfully* modern and mad."

"Do you know," said the turkey, "you're quacking!
There's a fox creeping up thro' the rye;

And, if you're not utterly lacking,
You'll make for that duck-pond. Good-bye!"

"I won't," said the duckling. "I'll lift him
A beautiful song, like a sheep;
And when I have—as it were—biffed him,
I'll give him my feathers to keep."

Now the curious end of this fable,
So far as the rest ascertained,
Though they searched from the barn to the stable,
Was that *only his feathers remained.*

So he *wasn't* the bond slave of habit,
And he *didn't* have webs on his toes;
And *perhaps* he runs round like a rabbit,
A rabbit as red as a rose.

II

THE MAN WHO DISCOVERED THE USE OF A CHAIR

THE man who discovered the use of a chair,
Odds—bobs—
What a wonderful man!
He used to sit down on it, tearing his hair,
Till he thought of a highly original plan.

DISCOVERED THE USE OF A CHAIR

For years he had sat on his chair, like you,
Quite—still!
But his looks were grim
For he wished to be famous (as great men do)
And nobody ever would listen to him.

Now he went one night to a dinner of state
Hear! hear!
In the proud Guildhall!
And he sat on his chair, and he ate from a plate;
But nobody heard his opinions at all;

There were ten fat aldermen down for a speech
(*Grouse! Grouse!*
What a dreary bird!)
With five fair minutes allotted to each,
But never a moment for *him* to be heard.

But, each being ready to talk, I suppose,
Order! Order!
They cried, *for the Chair!*
And, much to their wonder, our friend arose
And fastened his eye on the eye of the Mayor.

DISCOVERED THE USE OF A CHAIR

"We have come," he said, "to the fourteenth course!
"*High—time,*
for the Chair," he said.
Then, with both of his hands, and with all of his force,
He hurled his chair at the Lord Mayor's head.

It missed that head by the width of a hair.
Gee—whizz!
What a horrible squeak!
But it crashed through the big bay-window there
And smashed a bus into Wednesday week.

And the very next day, in the decorous *Times*
(*Great—Guns—*
How the headlines ran!)
In spite of the kings and the wars and the crimes,
There were five full columns about that man.

ENVOI

Oh, if you get dizzy when authors write
(*My stars!*
And you very well may!)

That white is black and that black is white,
You should sit, quite still, in your chair and say:

It is easy enough to be famous now,
Puff—Puff!
How the trumpets blare!)
Provided, of course, that you don't care how,
Like the man who discovered the use of a chair.

III

COTTON-WOOL

SHUN the brush and shun the pen,
Shun the ways of clever men,
When they prove that black is white,
Whey they swear that wrong is right,
When they roast the singing stars
Like chestnuts, in between the bars,
Children, let a wandering fool
Stuff your ears with cotton-wool.

When you see a clever man
Run as quickly as you can.
You must never, never, never
Think that Socrates was clever.

COTTON-WOOL

The cleverest thing I ever knew
Now cracks walnuts at the Zoo.
Children, let a wandering fool
Stuff your ears with cotton-wool.

Homer could not scintillate.
Milton, too, was merely great.
That's a very different matter
From talking like a frantic hatter.
Keats and Shelley had no tricks.
Wordsworth never climbed up sticks.
Children, let a wandering fool
Stuff your ears with cotton-wool.

Lincoln would create a gloom
In many a London drawing-room;
He'd be silent at their wit,
He would never laugh at it.
When they kissed Salome's toes,
I think he'd snort and blow his nose.
Children, let a wandering fool
Stuff your ears with cotton-wool.

They'd curse him for a silly clown,
They'd drum him out of London town.

Professor Flunkey, the historian,
Would say he was a dull Victorian.
Matthew, Mark, and Luke and John,
Bless the bed I rest upon.
Children, let a wandering fool
Stuff your ears with cotton-wool.
Amen.

IV

FASHIONS

FASHION on fashion on fashion,
(With only the truth growing old!)
And here's the new purple of passion,
(And love waiting out in the cold)
Who'll buy?
They are crying new lamps for Aladdin,
New worlds for the old and the true;
And no one remembers the story
The magic was not in the new.

They are crying a new rose for Eden,
A rose of green glass. I suppose
The only thing wrong with their rose is
The fact that it isn't a rose.
Who'll buy?

FASHIONS

And here is a song without metre;
  And, here again, nothing is wrong;
(For nothing on earth could be neater)
  Except that—it isn't a song.

Well. Walk on your hands. It's the latest!
  And feet are Victorian now;
And even our best and our greatest
  Before that dread epithet bow.
    Who'll buy?
The furniture goes for a song, now.
  The sixties had horrible taste.
But the trouble is this—they've included
  Some better things, too, in their haste.

Were they wrapped in the antimacassars,
  Or sunk in a sofa of plush?
Did an Angelican bishop forget them,
  And leave them behind in the crush?
    Who'll buy?
Here's a turnex. It's going quite cheaply.
  (It lived with stuffed birds in the hall!
And, of course, to a mind that thinks deeply
  That settles it, once and for all.)

FASHIONS

Here's *item*, a ring (very plain, sirs!),
  And *item*, a God (but He's dead!);
They say we shall need Him again, sirs,
  So—*item*, a cross for His head.
    Who'll buy?
Yes, you'll need it again, though He's dead, sirs.
  It is only the fashions that fly.
So here are the thorns for His head, sirs.
  They'll keep till you need 'em. Who'll buy?

EPILOGUE

THE REWARD OF SONG

WHY do we make our music?
Oh, blind dark strings reply:
Because we dwell in a strange land
And remember a lost sky.
We ask no leaf of the laurel,
We know what fame is worth;
But our songs break out of our winter
As the flowers break out on the earth.

And we dream of the unknown comrade,
In the days when we lie dead,
Who shall open our book in the sunlight,
And read, as ourselves have read,
On a lonely hill, by a firwood,
With whispering seas below,
And murmur a song we made him
Ages and ages ago.

If making his may-time sweeter
With dews of our own dead may,
One pulse of our own dead heart-strings
Awake in his heart that day,

THE REWARD OF SONG

We would pray for no richer guerdon,
  No praise from the careless throng;
For song is the cry of a lover
  In quest of an answering song.

As a child might run to his elders
  With news of an opening flower
We should walk with our young companion
  And talk to his heart for an hour,
As once by my own green firwood,
  And once by a Western sea,
Thank God, my own good comrades
  Have walked and talked with me.

Too mighty to make men sorrow,
  Too weak to heal their pain
(Though they that remember the hawthorn
  May find their heaven again),
We are moved by a deeper hunger;
  We are bound by a stronger cord;
For love is the heart of our music,
  And love is its one reward.

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